

**TESTIMONY OF Mayme W. Casady.
RAISED SENATE BILL 65
FEBRUARY 28, 2008**

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman & Members of the Labor Committee.

My name is Mayme W. Casady. I live in East Hartford, and work for the State, Department of Administrative Services in Hartford. I am a co-worker of David McCue, who is legally blind and relies on a guide dog to get through the day.

I am here today to speak in support of S. B. No. 65 (RAISED) AN ACT ALLOWING BLIND OR PHYSICALLY DISABLED STATE OR QUASI-PUBLIC EMPLOYEES TO USE ACCUMULATED SICK LEAVE FOR GUIDE DOG TRAINING.

I would like to suggest the extension of the maximum time allowed for guide dog training be expanded to 30 days, due to requirements made by the training school, anywhere from 2 - 6 weeks training. Mind you, this requires double teaching... the recipient- to trust and give commands, and for the dog – to take commands from a stranger.

Our neighbor New York State, allows their state employees 26 days sick time for guide dog training, plus allows the employee to borrow up to 26 days if needed (to be paid back as soon as possible.) Because of copyrights I can only paraphrase the allowance.

You can obtain a copy from the New York State Library – Cultural Education Center, Albany N.Y. Phone: 518-474-5145; Fax: 518-474-5786. Request: NY Codes, Rules and Regulations; Sections 21.3 – 21.4, entitled Sick Leave/Extended Sick Leave (fee \$10.00 for 10 pgs or portion thereof.)

Without allowing the sick time, in order to cover the maximum training period (six weeks) the State is saying to the blind/legally blind employee - for three years – he's entitled to 2 days vacation/ a year, in order to bank 10 days/ year. A guide dog works an average of seven years before retirement.

State union contracts allow sick time for eye exams and treatment. The guide dog has been an option for blindness since World War I. If it were an amputated leg with therapy needed for a prosthesis (replacement of a body part) we wouldn't be sitting here. A seeing-eye/guide dog is trained to be the replacement of a body part.

Thank you for listening to me and for raising this important legislation.

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